

REMARKS

In view of the Office Action dated November 23, 2007 and a telephone interview with Examiner Ripley on February 21, 2008, the application is amended in a manner believed to place same in condition for allowance. Reconsideration of the application is requested.

Applicants appreciate the indication of allowable subject matter in Claims 12, 14, 15, 22 and 24-30. In the Response, Claims 11-13 and 21-23 have been cancelled and Claims 10, 14, 15, 19, 25 and 30 have been amended. Amended Claim 10 further recites the features of cancelled Claim 12.

The objection to the drawings set forth at page 2 of the Office Action has been considered. The objected to language in Claim 25 has been revised as discussed in the telephone interview with Examiner Ripley. Thus no issue is believed to remain with regard to any feature of the invention specified in the claims not being illustrated in the drawings. Therefore, withdrawal of the objection to the drawings is respectfully requested.

The objection to Claim 10 has been considered. Claim 10 has been amended as suggested in the Office Action to include line indentations separating various elements therein. Further, the antecedent basis for "tubular portion" has been amended as suggested. Therefore, reconsideration and withdrawal of the objection to Claim 10 is respectfully requested.

The rejection of Claims 11-15, 19, 20 and 22-30 under 35 USC §112, second paragraph, as being indefinite has been considered.

Claims 11-13, 22 and 23 have been cancelled. In Claims 19, 25 and 30, the objected to term "transverse" has been deleted.

The rejection of Claim 12 based on it being unclear as to which of the two web portions and two radially projecting flanges are in surface-to-surface contact has been considered. This feature from cancelled Claim 12 has been incorporated

into independent Claim 10. Claim 10 now recites that each said web portion is in surface-to-surface contact with a respective said radially projecting flange. Thus, the claim language now clearly states how the web portions and flanges are in contact.

For the above reasons, reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection of Claims 14, 15, 19, 20 and 24-30 under 35 USC §112, second paragraph is respectfully requested.

The rejection of Claims 10, 11, 16, 17, 19 and 20 under 35 USC §102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 5 273 322 to Straub has been considered.

Claim 10 has been amended to recite the features of Claim 12 as discussed at page 10, last paragraph, of the Office Action. Therefore, reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection of independent Claim 10, and Claims 16, 17, 19 and 20 dependent therefrom, is respectfully requested.

The rejection of Claims 13, 18, 21 and 23 under 35 USC §103 as being unpatentable over Straub in view of U.S. Patent No. 6 206 434 to Schreiter has been considered. Claims 13, 21 and 23 have been cancelled. Claim 18 depends from Claim 10, which now includes the features of Claim 12. Thus, the rejection of Claim 18 is now believed moot and withdrawal of the rejection is respectfully requested.

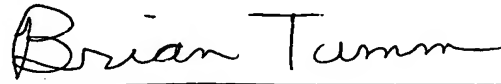
Applicants appreciate the indication of allowable subject matter in independent Claims 25 and 30, which have been amended to address the rejection as being indefinite. The amendments to Claims 25 and 30 do not significantly change the scope of the claims, which remain allowable for at least the reasons set forth at page 11 of the Office Action. Therefore, consideration and allowance of Claims 25 and 30, along with Claims 26-29 dependent from Claim 25, is respectfully requested.

The above amendments place the application in allowable form and entry thereof and allowance of Claims 10, 14-20 and 24-30 is respectfully requested.

In view of the above, the instant application is believed

to be in condition for allowance, and action toward that end
is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,



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136.07/05